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**ROCKFORD MAN SENTENCED TO 9 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR POSSESSING A FIREARM AS A CONVICTED FELON**

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; PHILLIP J. NICOLosi, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and CHET EPPERSON, Chief of the Rockford Police Department, today made the following announcement:

Today, United States District Judge Philip G. Reinhard sentenced **NATHAN C. ELLIS**, 29, of Rockford, Illinois, to 9 years in federal prison, without parole, for possessing a firearm as a convicted felon. The court also ordered Ellis to serve three years of supervised release following his release from prison. Ellis pled guilty on August 7, 2007.

Ellis, a multi-convicted felon, was arrested by Rockford Police officers on March 9, 2007. In pleading guilty, Ellis admitted that on March 9, 2007 he was walking near the intersection of Tay and Green Streets in Rockford while carrying a Norinco SKS-7 7.62 mm semiautomatic rifle which had one round in the chamber and 26 additional rounds in the attached magazine. Ellis further admitted that when two Rockford Police Detectives approached him and identified themselves as police officers, he dropped the rifle and started running. Ellis was apprehended by one of the detectives a few blocks from where they had first observed him. Ellis admitted he knowingly possessed the rifle which had traveled across state lines prior to his possession of it. Ellis has been in custody since his arrest.

First charged by the Winnebago County States Attorney's Office under state law, Ellis was transferred to federal court where he was charged under tough federal firearms laws as part of the Project Safe Neighborhoods program. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an intensive, cooperative effort between local, state, and federal law enforcement to attack gun crimes. The cornerstone of the program is that every defendant charged in state court for an offense involving a gun will be reviewed for possible federal prosecution in order to obtain the harshest penalties for the worst offenders. Additional information about Project Safe Neighborhoods may be found at www.psn.gov.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and the Rockford Police Department. The case was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

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